

# RABIES SPECIMEN SUBMISSION PROTOCOL

## for

## GENERAL INFORMATION

DCLS provides laboratory testing support to local, state and federal agencies whose mission includes the prevention of rabies in animals and humans. DCLS operates testing sites to detect the rabies virus in Richmond and Abingdon, Virginia. Each laboratory site is responsible for receiving, processing and testing specimens, and providing accurate and prompt reports of analyses to the submitter. Submitters are responsible for collecting and submitting the appropriate specimens for testing with completed submission forms. The laboratories will provide results to the local health department or a submitting agency authorized by the district health director (i.e. local animal control agencies, VDACS, etc.) The laboratories are not responsible for providing test results and interpretation to animal owners, individuals who may have been exposed to an infected animal and owners of animals that require post exposure management.

- All positive results are telephoned directly to the local health department or the authorized submitting agency.
- Specimens received by 9:00 a.m. (Monday–Saturday) will be tested on the day of delivery. **A telephone number must be supplied for after hours or emergency contact for reporting positive results.**
- Contact Information: DCLS Richmond Telephone Number: 804-648-4480  
DCLS Abingdon Telephone Number: 276-676-5435
- **Emergency testing will require notification from a District Health Director. DCLS can be notified of an emergency test request by telephoning the Emergency Pager Number: 804-418-9923.**
- DCLS offers statewide courier service. Specimens submitted to the courier normally arrive prior to normal business hours the following day (8:15 A.M.). Contact DCLS Customer Service at 804-648-4480 x 109 for information regarding courier sites.

## SPECIMEN COLLECTION

Specimen collection guidelines may be obtained from the Virginia Department of Health (VDH) District Office. This information is also available on the VDH website at <http://www.vdh.state.va.us/epi/rabies.asp> (Rabies Control Guidelines.)

**A live animal will not be accepted by the laboratory.** The animal should be humanely euthanized without damage to the head. The head must then be removed from the body and submitted intact for examination. Exception: The entire body of small mammals such as bats, mice, squirrels, etc. may be submitted (See Specimen Collection above).

Specimens will be tested if submitted for the following reasons:

**A. Significant human or domestic animal exposure from an animal considered to pose a risk of transmitting rabies. Bats should be tested if there is any possibility of human exposure.**

- Significant human exposure is defined as a skin-puncturing bite or saliva on a mucous membrane or saliva in a fresh skin penetrating wound.
- Non-bite exposure to a bat is also significant if there is any possibility of an unrecognized bite (e.g. direct contact with a bat or a bat is discovered in a room with an unattended child or mentally impaired person.)
- Domestic animal exposure is a dog, cat, other companion animals or livestock that has been bitten or may have been bitten by a suspected rabid animal.

**B. Recommendation from a public health official using guidance found in most current edition of *Human Rabies Prevention-United States, Recommendations of the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP)*. This document may be found at the VDH website at <http://www.vdh.state.va.us/epi/rabies.asp>**

## **SUBMISSION FORM**

The submission form **must** be completed in its entirety and submitted in triplicate to ensure proper identification of the animal as well as providing the necessary information for reporting results of testing. Incomplete information on the submission form will delay the laboratory's ability to report results, and may cause the specimen to be rejected.

## **SUBMISSION AND PACKAGING**

- All materials collected for rabies diagnosis are to be considered infectious, and appropriate handling and shipping precautions should be taken in order to insure the safety of the collector/submitter, transportation carriers, laboratory staff and the public at large in accordance with 49 CFR Department of Transportation Regulations.
- Specimens should be submitted to the laboratory **promptly and cold** to reduce decomposition of the animals. **Use frozen cold packs only.** Do **not** use "wet" ice when shipping specimens. "Wet" ice may leak through the container possibly causing rejection of specimen for testing.
- Keep the specimen cold but not frozen. A frozen specimen will delay testing; possibly one full

day.

- All specimens should be sprayed or dusted for fleas and ticks with a pesticide prior to packaging.
- When packaging rabies specimens, wear disposable gloves. All diagnostic specimens must be clearly labeled with a health department or animal control internal number or identifier and the animal species. Specimens **must** be triple packaged:

**Suggested Materials for Use and Proper Handling**

- 1) Primary Container: Zip lock bags or heavy-duty plastic bag appropriately sized for the specimens with an absorbent material (absorbent pads, paper towels, etc) placed in the bag to prevent blood and body fluid from leaking. If sharp objects protrude from the specimen such as shattered bone, wrap the specimen in several layers of newspaper. **Always tightly seal or fasten the primary container to contain the specimen.**
- 2) Secondary Container: A metal can, heavy plastic pail with a lid or a heavy-duty plastic bag may be used as the secondary container. These must also be sealed to help prevent leakage of blood or body fluid. The multi-part Rabies Submission Form **must** be enclosed in a plastic bag (zip lock) and taped to the secondary container.
- 3) Rigid Container: A tightly sealed, thick-walled insulated container with or without an exterior fiberboard liner may be used as the shipping container. The secondary container is placed inside the shipping container along with sufficient frozen cold packs and cushion material to prevent damage to the specimen during transport.

**Note: When shipping more than one specimen in this container each specimen must be individually bagged and placed in secondary containers along with a submission form attached.**

- The outside of the container **should be cleansed with a disinfectant** (example: 10 % bleach: 9 parts water and 1 part fresh household bleach). This will reduce risk of exposure of a potentially positive specimen to anyone handling this package. Make bleach solution fresh each time.
- Secure the shipping container (snap lid or tape) for transport and address the package.

DCLS Richmond  
600 N 5<sup>th</sup> Street

DCLS Abingdon  
165 East Valley Street

Richmond, Va. 23219  
Attn: Rabies

Abingdon, Va. 24210  
Attn: Rabies

*Diagram of Packaging Instructions*

